

GAY SPIRIT VISIONS NEWSLETTER

Volume 1, Number 1

February, 1995



WELCOME!

Welcome to the first edition of the Gay Spirit Visions Newsletter. This Newsletter is something we've talked about for quite some time at Conference planning meetings, and grows out of our desire to facilitate a greater sense of connection and communication within our growing community. Our goal is to create a forum in which we can share with each other, on an ongoing basis, our visions, insights and dreams relating to living spiritually as Gay men.

The newsletter will appear quarterly in (approximately) January, April, July, and October. Our format will be small to begin with, as you can see, and may change or expand as we get a greater feel for the needs of our community.

In each issue, we'll be sharing information about upcoming events, new writings from various individuals (including you!), and publishing what has been written about or for us in the past.

WE NEED YOUR INPUT!

Communication is a two-way process. Your input will make this newsletter work. Each issue, we'll solicit your thoughts on a different aspect of Gay Spirit Vision. According to the amount of material we receive,

we'll include as much as we can in the next issue. Initially, because of our limited space, we ask that you keep your comments short, and remind you we may have to edit, excerpt or omit submissions as necessary.

For next issue, we'd like to hear about any outstanding moments, inspirations or changes you experienced as a result of attending one of our Celebrating Gay Spirit Visions Conferences at the Mountain. Deadline for submissions will be March 15.

HELP US NAME THE NEWSLETTER

We'd like to choose a name for the Newsletter before next issue. We'd like a name that reflects the spirit of the Conference and our sharing. Send us your suggestions.

MAILING LIST

You've received this Newsletter because you're on our Gay Spirit Visions mailing list, either because you've attended a conference or a related event, or have expressed an interest in our community. If you know of anyone else who would like to be involved, check it out with them and send us their names and addresses. Please return your address label to us if you'd like to be off the mailing list, or need to send us an address correction.

UPCOMING EVENTS

(Call 404/292-8567 for directions or more information)

February 11: Conference Planning Meeting, 10AM - 1PM, at the Atlanta Friends Meeting House, 701 W. Howard Ave., Decatur, GA.

March 11: Conference Planning Meeting, 10AM - 1PM, at Atlanta Friends Meeting House.

April 1: Mandala: Weaving Gay Spirit (our annual Spring gathering), 10AM-6PM, with party afterward, at Atlanta Friends Meeting House. Admission \$30 preregistered, \$35 at door.

April 8: Conference Planning Meeting, 10AM - 1PM, at Atlanta Friends Meeting House.

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INSIDE

We begin this issue with a reprint of James Broughton's delightful keynote address at our second Conference, September 21, 1991.

THE HOLINESS OF SEXUALITY

by

James Broughton

I am here as a spokesman for gaiety of spirit and glory of the flesh. My text for this happy sermon is a statement from Novalis: There is only one temple in the world, and that is the human body.

Persuade yourself of this truth and let it radiate through you. Dissuade yourself of any notion that Spirit is something that only hangs around churches or is something fuzzy flitting over your head. Recognize that

ashamed. And unacceptable to the tyrannies of conformity. This prompts repressive measures, fundamentalist fear of the body, and homophobia. True religion, unlike the church, is the practice of sexual loving.

Historically the church has denounced pleasure seekers of all kinds: not only lovers but artists, performers, magicians, mystics. Even orthodox Buddhism is unfriendly toward human pleasure. Buddha him-

Life is a happy valley as well as a vale of tears. Life is a densely mixed blessing: a painful joy, a dance of opposites, a warring peace, an ecstatic agony. It is the playing field of the Divine. So let us live fully in our temples with respect for their wonders.

I ask you now to experience your body as a sacred place. A temple is a place to sing hymns of praise. From your tiptoe to your topknot you are throbbingly alive. Feel your glow. Feel it sing. Know that you partake of the divine, that you are lived by the divine, that you are divine. You embody the mystery of life.

For a moment place both hands over your genitals. Not to conceal them, but to cherish, and to praise. This is the creative core of your godbody, the place of instinct, impulse and transformation. Concentrate on your phallic glory. The penis is the exposed tip of the heart. The penis is a wand of the soul. Whatever its shape, size or shame, it is your holy birthright. Praise it. Give thanks for its awesome powers. Its energies permeate every corner of your

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your body is a divinity you inhabit.

I am not here to convert you to any body of doctrine. I am here to convince you of the holiness in your own body. The moral religions -- Christianity, Judaism, Islam -- have insisted that this precious and beautiful world we inhabit is the domain of Satan. Therefore its sensual pleasures must be avoided so that one will not end up in damnation. To the orthodox the body is a sewer, not a temple. To them the wondrous natural activities of the body -- eating, farting, shitting, fucking, even spitting and yawning and dancing, to say nothing of gambling and gamboling -- are disgusting and unacceptable to the Holy Spirit.

I harp on the curse of church doctrine because its inheritance permeates the thinking of our entire society: our laws, education, government, and social attitudes. Churches exist to make you feel miserable. And

self insisted that life is suffering and that in order not to suffer everyone should get rid of desire. Buddha was very down on desire. Broughton is very up on desire.

Zen and Taoism are practical philosophies, not religions. They assert the matter of fact as true enlightenment. No gods, no theology. Zen says Everything is. Tao says Everything flows.

The proper activity in a temple is worship. Share your holiness. Visit one another's temples.

Only Hinduism beholds the world sensually, seeing everything as divine, praising the sexual organs, celebrating sexual desire as an impulse of the gods, striving toward what is called the Great Delight.

Let fundamentalism feel threatened by any manifestation of naked joy. To a gay spirit pleasure is a great moral good.

temple, connect all the chakras, the highest to the lowest. Phallus, perineum and anus form the trinity at the root of your torso's experience. I use the Latin terms to dignify these centers, to make them sound like Roman gods.

In the holy balls in your scrotum the treasure of your semen is kept. This is the

monstrance for the consecrated Host of your temple. Did you know that the one part of you that never grows old is your semen? An anatomist told me. You can lose your mind, have

On the contrary, let sexual enthusiasm radiate throughout your body -- through your bloodstream, your guts, your heartbeat. Always take hold of your sex with love. The proper

body would jump up, slam the door and try to rape me. That was not the idea at all. I was simply performing my holy rounds, my Stations of the Cross. Each cock was a bead of my rosary.

Now place your left hand on your phallus and your right hand over your left breast. You are touching the Opposites in your Body: your masculine phallus and your feminine breast which holds your heart inside it. This is a way to affirm the wholeness of your being. Inner unity is the wedding of these opposites, creating the Divine Androgyne, the hermaphro-deity you were born with. Your birthright was double-sexed: half from the mother, half from the father. Don't create other divisions, this one is sufficient.

And from this vantage point you can open your temple to love. If you love your godbody well, you are better able to love others. To paraphrase a great poet and lover of men who was born in Bethlehem: "All that you need to know in life is to love yourself so that you can love those around you. Love the Godbody in them with all your heart and soul and mind. On these two principles hang all the meanings of religion." So, share your holiness. Reach out to your neighbor and go together into the kingdom.

In the sauna I was sweating among the sweat of others and the sweat was weeping from the deep ache in those bodies. It wept from their armpits, from their groins, from their brows -- weep-

The penis is the exposed tip of the heart.

heart failure, suffer intestinal collapse: your semen will remain forever young. Doesn't that suggest that you will possess plenty of spirit to the end of your days?

When it comes to spiritual enlightenment, it would be better if you **did** lose your mind. The mind is a secondary organ that thinks it is smarter than all the rest of you. It is stuffed with critical opinions and inherited prejudices. For instance, don't let your mind try to castrate you because of some misguided feminist notion that your maleness is something shameful, some kind of despoiling weapon. Genital aggression for intimidation and dominance is a perversion that desecrates the temple. Perverse greed for power is the mind's ugly doing. The mind is the worst pervert in the world. Your sexuality in its natural force does not destroy you. It proliferates.

You don't have to renounce anything in order to be spiritual. Renounce only your continuing misery. Renounce making judgments and putting up barriers. Be kind to your instincts. In the goddess sanctuaries of antiquity, her priests castrated themselves as acts of total surrender. But that is ultimate submission to the Great Mother. Becoming a eunuch will not solve your erotic problems, your heartache or your loneliness.

activity in a temple is worship. Share your holiness. Visit one another's temples.

I was born a lover. I was born to love my fellowmen. I don't wish to compete with them, outmaneuver them, trick, trip or trounce them. I don't think of them as objects to acquire. They are shining substance of my own godbody flesh. I am **not** interested in their armors, nor the games of their egos. I am not eager to ridicule or stab them in the back. For this affectionate attitude I endured humiliating punishments. But in the end I am proud to assert my natural nature and my dedication to loving mankind.

"Reach/Touch/Connect" is one of my mottoes. I have difficulty keeping my hands off my fellow men. "The beauty of man is my hope and my sorrow." I long to embrace and caress, lie

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close, share my words and my songs, confide the secrets of my longing.

Perhaps I was naive in the dear old days of the Turkish Baths. I moved fondly past the cubicles and entered each one just to touch and to kiss the holy icon of each body on each cot. I would be astonished when a

ing of unspoken desire, the desire for love seeping from their hearts in mutual sweat.

Be not shy of the love you share with other men. Be unafraid of its splendor. It marries Hermes to Aphrodite within you, takes you on a quest with a Twin Hero. Fear of love is fear of the sublime. Deny it at your peril. Love is the only remedy for the plagues of the world. Love is a radiant energy wave. You occupy love as you

occupy space. You breathe love as you breathe air. Its force operates the universe. Love one another! Is this too difficult for intelligence to allow? To love is the major goal of life. To be a lover is to practice the major art of life.

Said the wonderful Chinese sage, Lao-Tzu:

Men are by nature born soft and supple.

Dead, they are stiff and hard.

Plants are born tender and pliant.

Dead they are brittle and dry.

Thus, whoever is stiff and inflexible is a disciple of death.

Whoever is soft and yielding is a disciple of life.

The hard and the stiff will be broken, the soft and the supple will prevail.

Boys are taught to be stiff and hard, brittle and dry. Taught to be cruel, ruthless, unfeeling. Example: the boot camps for Marines in the movie "Full Metal Jacket." Instead of being trained to kill one another, instead of bashing one another on a football field, couldn't boys be taught to dance together?

Instead of going out and making trouble, devote one hour a day to making love. It's a ravishing form of meditation. Put lovemaking before money-making and troublemaking. Teach lovemaking in every school. Make loving a national endeavor. Install Love Officers Training Corp. in high schools. Instruct youth in every aspect of making love.

Clasp, kiss and connect. Relish differences and similarities. Rub against fellow creatures of all stripes, shapes, scents and sweats, all textures, tints and tastes. How else will we end the civil wars of the world?

You must love even if it hurts. It will hurt more if you don't love. Can you make a holy habit of sexual love? Can you make a sexual habit of holy love? Can you dump your qualms and excuses, your taboos and allergies? Think of it: if you devoted to the practice of love as much energy as you expend on trivialities and cruel schemes, you might change the world.

To make connection -- shaking or holding a hand is a start. But let's go farther. Leo Buscaglia campaigns for hugging, which affirms trust and respect. When you hug, put your whole body into it. I would add kissing. Kissing is head-on connecting. It is life restoring. It resuscitates. Besides, it tastes interesting. Practice life-saving on your neighbors. At San Francisco State University I started kissing all my colleagues in the Creative Arts Department as a regular daily greeting. It seemed to cheer them up.

But what about much deeper connecting? What about fully loving your neighbor as yourself, and affirming mutual divinity? Whatever happened to friendship? Keats said: "Friendship is the holy emotion." In an earlier age the highest expression of civilization was the supreme tenderness one man could manifest for another. In that chivalric time these devotions contained intense emotional feeling. Their deep commitment obliged a man to go to bat for his bosom friend, no matter what the risk, as well as to share his friend's achievements as his own.

In Shakespeare, we often observe these noble sharings and their declarations of valorous love. The sturdiest feeling in Hamlet's life is for Horatio. Michel Foucault has pointed out how, in the 17th and 18th centuries, these heroic passions began to be criticized. When personal friendships triumph, bureaucracies and political constructs do not function well. In education, in religious orders, in the armed forces, group ethos is more valued than individual loyalties. In order to subjugate fraternity of feeling, the justice system in the 18th century made deep friendship unacceptable, declaring love between men to be a sexual perversion. Thus, natural affection and mutual devotion turned into social problem and political crime.

To patriotic ears, E.M. Forster's vow during World War I sounds traitorous: "If I had to choose between betraying my country and betraying my friend, I hope I would have the strength to betray my country." That puts the

Love is the meaning of life, the only meaning it has. A soldier's hands are wasted cocking guns. Love is the only solution to every problem, the only salvation that has never been implemented. It has been talked about, but never tried. The truth always ends up being Love and nothing really works well without it. Love is the only scientific philosophy. An unlovable attitude is bad business. Even vultures exercise tenderness in springtime.

Could I persuade you to become passionate missionaries? Would you take on the mission of spreading love? I do not see you as an isolated, self-centered clan. I behold you as propagators of the Faith, faith in the loving aspects of man's nature.

You have shown sterling compassion in tending to the doomed and the dying. Do not forget to tend the living, those who need desperately to be wakened to life before they too begin to perish. Souls are sick all around us in this crass and violent time. Bring them love. Massage their hearts. Become ministers of compassion and wisdom, like many affectionate Dalai Lamas.

Could you become a secret order, devoted to spreading the love of mankind, like Jesus and his band of camarados? They were "outside the mainstream" of society, because they were in the mainstream of wisdom. They were thought of as lunatic fringe, an annoying minority. But they were actually at the heart of the matter. They believed in the eros that could be aroused in every man.

Stop thinking of yourselves as out-

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emphasis on human values rather than on the abstraction of the body politic wherein one is expected to function without feeling. Nowadays a friend is someone you can use to get ahead or borrow money from, someone to drive you to the airport or the hospital. You don't set off together like knights errant to explore a new land, found a city, bring back a boon to enrich the souls of your fellow men. Nowadays the therapist, the lawyer, the doctor, the stockbroker become those you rely upon. However, you have to pay for their sympathetic aid and can merely hope the investment will prove worth the expense.

casts. You are meridian persons at the core of truth. You are not slaves to the breeding machinery. You are not swallowed by the consumer collective. You are raising consciousness, not babies. You are advocates of divine merriment. You could be innovators of a new way of life. Buddha said, "The world is on fire, and every solution short of liberation is like trying to whitewash a burning house."

Let yourself be believed by your angels. Open your orifices to dominions and powers. Pledge your valor and irradiate your temple. The holiness of sexuality gives every man his chance to be a genius.